

If You Don't Like Church Now...

by Wayne Goff

...**What will you think of heaven?** Early in my preaching career I learned that not everybody was in love with coming to church. A young, teenage girl asked me in class: "Is heaven like going to church all the time?!" If it was, she was going to have to reconsider her decisions.

Unfortunately, she is not alone. God's people in Malachi's day had the same problem.

"But you profane it, in that you say, 'The table of the LORD is defiled; and its fruit, its food, is contemptible.' You also say, 'Oh, what a weariness!' and you sneer at it," says the LORD of hosts. And you bring the stolen, the lame, and the sick; thus you bring an offering! Should I accept this from your hand? says the LORD."

These were not the glory years of Israel as they were in the days of King David. But then again, the nation had brought its misery on itself. The repeated history of ignoring God, forsaking His laws, and worshiping idols had placed Israel in the situation they were in around 400 B.C. And Malachi's words would be the last they would hear from God for the next four centuries!

When John the Baptist and Jesus Christ Himself arrived on the scene around A.D. 30, their first words were "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand!" (Matt. 3:1-2; Mk. 1:14-15). You and I don't have to wonder why!

The majority of the nation rejected Jesus Christ, just as they had rejected His heavenly Father. The nation crucified Jesus Christ and as a result suffered the national death penalty at the hands of the Roman Empire in 70 A.D. But it didn't have to be that way. Jesus bemoaned their fate in Matthew 23 with these words: "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the one who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing! See! Your house is left to you desolate" (vv. 37-38).

God forces nobody to love and obey Him. But He does not give anyone a pass either. God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son (Jn. 3:16). If that doesn't cause you to love and obey God, then nothing in this world will. You will be left to your own doom and damnation. There is no other way but Jesus.

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